

TO ARCHITECTURAL STUDENTS.
No. I.

ON THE CHOICE OF A COURSE OF STUDY.

We deem the letters of our young friends from Newcastle and Sheffield, and the similar letters which we are constantly receiving, as most important evidence in favour of our undertaking. The young architects of this country are those with whom the problem rests as to which is to be the style of forthcoming centuries. Led on by their elders in the investigation of the various favoured modes of antiquity, and influenced by one to affect this, by another to affect that, and among heads to affect all, they will begin, and have already begun, to perceive that this confusion and contradiction is a chaos, from which some reasonable mode of escape is highly desirable. And when we have such questions put to us as in Mr. Walheim's letter, we have sounded in our ears, in the first audible terms, that note of preparation which these times, and we flatter ourselves this paper, is destined to give a public tone to—the note of preparation for emerging from the bondage of centuries of liveness in fancy, or slavishness in imitation.

How hard to draw the line between the wild sallies of an aimless originality, and the unreasoning servility of those whom accident or circumstance has made into little better than blind devotees. How hard to make choice of that exact line in one's conduct which dictates a becoming reverence for ancient excellence—for its genius, invention, practiced skill, and the like—and which preserves its consistency in tendering the like respect to modern worth under similar conditions.

It is, however, between those extremes that the successful student in architecture has to steer, and to this medium he must attain. But in proportion to the difficulty of the task, must be our diffidence in laying down any dogmas of our own. With Klenze on the one side and Pugin on the other, both wrong, or only one right, in saying which, we think we have said enough for a caution—with these so arrayed in opposite extremes, so confident, so dictatorial, and withal so talented, what have we to do? and what the poor architectural student? We must even labour, labour diligently, and incessantly; but every step in our operations must be accompanied by grave reflection; no thoughtless plungings into this or that arena; no throwing up of caps in childish partisanship; no school-boy freaks of wild enthusiasm; no well-whipped submissiveness; no subscribing of hands, or moulding of opinion, perforce—none of these. Diligence in work and freedom in thought, with the devotion of all to the highest purposes—with a consciousness of the high prerogatives of humanity, as well as of its littleness and meanness—of its safe guidance under one bias, of its certain wreck under the other—freely according to all, that which we modestly, not arrogantly, claim for ourselves,—these are some of the general rules by which we must be guided: they are those to which all men will subscribe. We commence, therefore, in safety from these, as from our legitimate starting-ground. All is clear up to this point, and you have your cue for the rest.

It may be necessary for us to say a few words now; and we shall from time to time have occasion to repeat them, as we journey on with our class, to warn them against taking opinions for authorities—the opinions of Klenze and Pugin; and we confine ourselves to these names, because they have been brought before us in the special instance which impels to the writing of this article.—The opinions of Klenze and Pugin are but the opinions of individuals, and while we would not detract one whit's worth from the esteem in which either of these talented men deserve to be held, we would, on the other hand, caution our young friends from attaching a false importance to their opinions. In all these cases, it is a very good plan to imagine yourselves listening to, and being present with, your oracles and instructors, to make yourselves conversant with certain circumstances under which their opinions are delivered, or by which they are influenced; and never for a moment to run away with, as "gospel truth," all that either one or the other may utter. We will just mention one point in order to shew upon what fallacious grounds a force may be given to arguments

upon one side of a question, and by a similar process may be as easily transferred to another. We take the case of the famous work published by Mr. Pugin—his *Contrasts*.

In this work we have placed in the most unfavourable juxtaposition representations of certain edifices of ancient and modern design of similar import; and the styles chosen for contrast are the Gothic and the hybrid or motley of the present day. Every one sees the inferiority of the latter in all those respects which pictorial art and peculiar appropriateness demand, and immediately a conclusion is jumped to, that Gothic is the only style to be tolerated or adopted; while, if the same plan had been pursued in setting before us the beauties of ancient art in any other mode or period, the same disparagement of modern efforts would have been the result, but a different conclusion would have been come to. The question that would most probably have grown out of all this would be, how did these ancients attain to such excellence and possess such beautiful styles of their own; and here we, who have been imitating and reviving for three centuries, seem further and farther removing from excellence and originality? and the answer would most probably have been the very reverse of that which appears to have been given,—leading to a perpetuation of, and a perseverance in, the same course of confusion and error, the answer would have been, we have failed through the servility of our imitation; every thing has been measured, approved, rejected, or condemned, by precedent, and what has it brought us to? Will not a continuance under some new phase of the same principle be likely to lead to the continuance of the same results. "Classic" one day, "Gothic" next—when shall we have Etruscan? Never till we go in search of it, and leave the others in their entirety. Never did the Gothic attain to an existence till it had cast off precedents, and the like may be said of every thing in art or science of which the world has heard; reproduction and revival is an impotent, we had almost said an impious, attempt to controvert the Law—we mean the reproduction of that which is already wrought out and worn out. Greek, Gothic, and all are defunct. The circumstances under which they lived are passed away; new circumstances have arisen; you may dandle and play with the toy for a period—from Jones to Wren you may play the variations in one key; from Wren to Chambers you may strum it in another; from Chambers to Wilkins in a third;

and the sweet discord may be maintained on the other side of the orchestra from Dance down to Wyatt. What Stuart attempted for the one, Pugin may for the other, and the versatile talent and acquirements of a Barry may exhibit itself in both; but all will fail, and has failed, to procure more than a brief interval of admiration for each respective effort.

Well has our young friend at Newcastle put the question, and if our answer does not suffice, we invite, and our columns are open to, a better solution. Truly, indeed, has he depicted the difficulty which a mind free to think and reflect, has to encounter; let him proclaim his question abroad, and the answer will be directed to all points of the compass. There is a pole of attraction to men of certain habits which is mistaken each for the true one; but the true pole remains to be discovered, and we are just on the eve of, or actually set out on, the journey of discovery.

But what, it will be asked, is the precise course we would advise or adopt? We have already said, to labour diligently, and to be ever active in thought and reflection; and we have ventured to lay down certain conditions under which this diligence and activity should be exercised—patience must fill up the measure. Not long will be our hiding-time.

Every thing is in motion, tending towards a certain point of confluent repose; and we are of the movement, humble atoms or agents, but yet working in an important purpose, and importantly working. Already are the signs of the new era distinctly marked in the horizon; the bright orient arrests the hopeful eye, and in whatever direction we are moving, to that do we constantly turn, cheered and cheering. From the workshop, the mine, and the laboratory most proceed the new spirit, the new genius of structure, which our young architects are to clothe with fitting grace and ornament. Never since the world stood, has its Maker more bountifully favoured it; the very bowels of the earth are made to exhibit a wealth which mocks and derides that of its surface; and the ingenuity of man, rightly directed, and properly influenced, is set in correspondence with it; therefore, then, have we stepped forward, and we conjure our young friends to accompany us in the campaign of virtuous purpose and just adventure. And they are stepping forward, they are eager, generously eager, to accompany us; and now we whisper in their ears the watchword, the rallying cry, "ART, SCIENCE, AND THE BROTHERHOOD."



TIMBER ARCHITECTURE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BUILDER.

April 3rd, 1843.

SIR,—I witness with pleasure your efforts to obtain for "timber architecture" a more exalted character than it at present enjoys. I need not say I most cordially wish you success. The enclosed is a design for a gatekeeper's lodge, intended to be built at Mutton, near Gravesend.

The external plinth is flint, tooled to a fair face, with oak eels, heads and corner-posts filled in with white stocks—but rough cast may be used to much advantage—and the roof covered with old red tiles.

Should you deem it worthy of notice in "THE BUILDER," I shall feel most happy.

Believe me, Sir, your very humble servant,

A YOUNG ARCHITECT.